

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

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JAMES STODDART, Esq.

LORD PROVOST OF EDINBURGH.

Walker (John) Baillie of Edinburgh

MY LORD,

I Am sorry that the just defence of my character, against the violent attacks of mistaken or ill-designing men, hath rendered it necessary that I should lay before the public, a plain, and, to my best recollection, a genuine account of my own conduct, respecting those matters of election which at present make so much noise in the city. And as my principal transactions were with your Lordship, I have chosen to publish my vindication to my fellow-citizens in the form of a letter and appeal to you.

It was much against my inclination that I accepted the office of a ~~magistrate at the last general election~~; but I yielded to your Lordship's pressing request, and acknowledge with pleasure, that your conduct in general, as chief magistrate of the city, hath been very agreeable to me, and in particular your disinterested and public-spirited views in chusing a minister for supplying the vacancy occasioned by the death of Dr. Cummin, made such an addition to the good opinion I had formed of you, that I resolved, so far as duty would permit, to support your interest, and to do you every service in my power.

Your Lordship will recollect, that, about the beginning of June last, you made an appointment to come to my house, that we might converse about the affairs of the community. You then informed me of an instance of bad treatment you had met with from Mr. Laurie, viz. That, in a confidential conversation with that gentleman early in the winter, about the person who should be your successor in office, Mr. Alexander Kincaid and I were both mentioned for that purpose; but that afterwards, without consulting you, he had written to Sir Laurence Dundas in favour of Mr. John Dalrymple: That Sir Laurence shewed you his letter when you was at London, in the month of December, and told you, at the same time,

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that he also was for Mr. Dalrymple to succeed you in office. To which piece of information you added, that as you was connected with Sir Laurence, you had been at pains to gain some additional friends to his interest in council, whom you would not chuse to lose, which you knew would be the case, if Mr. Dalrymple should be insisted upon for Provost.

Your Lordship next informed me, that you had been conversing with Mr. Elder and some other members of Council, about the limited footing upon which our magistracy had been for a considerable time past: That you were of opinion it ought to be on a broader bottom: That none but men of respectable characters should be elected to the magistracy, provided only they were friends to Sir Laurence Dundas. To which I reply'd, that I had always been of these sentiments, and should heartily join in that measure.---Your Lordship then proposed, that I should allow myself to be nominated for the office of Provost, as you knew it would succeed. I returned proper acknowledgments for the honour you intended me, but peremptorily refused the offer, not only on that occasion, but more than once afterwards, when Mr. Elder concurred with you in pressing me to consent, and gave my reasons for it. At a following conference, your Lordship and I agreed in opinion, that Mr. Kincaid, of whose friendship to Sir Laurence Dundas there could be no doubt, was the most proper person we could fix upon for provost; and as you recommended Mr. Elder for Dean of Guild, I agreed to that likewise.

This was the only agreement I ever made with your Lordship respecting matters of election, to the best of my knowledge.

For several weeks after the above conference, I spoke to none of your other friends upon the subject; and, when, in the latter end of July, Mr. Elder proposed, in your presence, that we should insist for carrying more than the Provost and Dean of Guild at the time of election, your Lordship will remember that I directly check'd the motion, and would not consent that any addition should be made to the original concert, viz. 1st, That the offices of magistracy should be filled with men of respectable character: 2^d, That they should be friendly to the interest of Sir Laurence Dundas: and, 3^d, That Mr. Kincaid and Mr. Elder, who were considered as possessing both these qualifications, should be fixed upon; Mr. Kincaid for the office of Chief Magistrate, and Mr. Elder for Dean of Guild.---Soon after, your Lordship set out for Ask-Hall, to lay before Sir Laurence the demand on our part, and to ask his concurrence; and on the morning after your return, you informed Mr. Elder and me, that you had not succeeded in your errand: That Sir Laurence proposed to
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come to Edinburgh directly, but you had dissuaded him from it, lest he should get a denial from your friends; but that you afterwards told him, he might do therein as he pleased.

Some time before Sir Laurence came to Edinburgh, you sent for me, and when I came I found Mr. Elder, and Mr. William Trotter with you. In the course of conversation you said to me, that you did not think you would act inconsistently, although you were to act in opposition to the interest of Sir Laurence Dundas. Surprised at the novelty of such language, I told you, with some warmth, that if you did so, I should certainly act in opposition to you.

It was, I think, after this time that you took occasion to mention to me a young nobleman in the neighbourhood, and an eminent lawyer, with high, and, I am persuaded, very just commendation; and knowing my desire to preserve the religious privileges of the community, you observed, that, allowing they were to have the management of this city, you was confident they would guard against bringing in unacceptable ministers, and encourage a free election, without using the right of presentation; and added, that you was convinced I might have any security I pleased that such would be their conduct. My answer was, That though I had a high opinion of the integrity and abilities of the honourable lawyer, yet the best way to judge of his principles in ecclesiastical matters was, by reviewing his past conduct in the General Assemblies, which, so far as I could recollect, was uniformly on the side of settling the presentee, though he had little or no concurrence at all.

A few days before the arrival of Sir Laurence Dundas, a report went that Mr. Elder was intended to be Provost: Upon this, at a meeting with Mr. Elder and some other of your friends, I enquired at your Lordship, if you had got Mr. Kincaid's consent to accept of that office, in the event of his being chosen; your answer was, that you had not talked with Mr. Kincaid since you came from Aik-Hall. I then demanded what you was to do if Mr. Kincaid should not accept; and, upon your proposing Mr. Elder to come in his place, I replied, What! Mr. Elder! a man of yesterday! (referring to the short time he has been here as a man of business), that will never do. Application was then made to Mr. Kincaid, and his consent was obtained.

Sir Laurence came here in the end of August; and, on the 4th instant, a young nobleman in this neighbourhood came to town, sent for some members of council, and openly declared, that he came to support your Lordship against those who were opposing the measures you pursued.

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I, that day, desired you to call a meeting of your friends, and, when fully convened, I represented to the company, that, as the D—ke of B—gh, and L—d A—te had made an open declaration against the interest of Sir Laurence Dundas, and said they came to support your Lordship, it could hardly be supposed that they would make such declaration, unless they had been encouraged by some members of council.

I therefore wanted to know, whether any then present had given them such encouragement, and begged that every one would tell his mind, plainly and without reserve, as an honest man. Your Lordship's answer was, that the above gentlemen had indeed applied to you about twelve days ago, offering their services: That they had afterwards repeated the offer, but that you did not return them any answer: That you had been ill used by Sir Laurence Dundas, and was not his political friend. All the rest of the company, without exception, professed and declared that they were his friends.

Laurence's

Your Lordship, at the desire of the meeting, with some others of the council, saw Mr. Dundas next day, who promised to give an answer to your demands on the Saturday thereafter. Accordingly he then told you, that Sir Laurence and his friends in council agreed that Mr. Kincaid should be Provost, and likewise that Mr. Elder should be Dean of Guild, on condition that he voted with them in the previous steps of the election.

Laurence's Dundas

That same evening your friends were assembled, to whom you reported Mr. Dundas's answer.

I then told the company, that, as Sir Laurence's friends had consented absolutely that Mr. Kincaid should be Provost, and that Mr. Elder should have their voices for Dean of Guild, upon a condition, that put it in his own power to secure his election, this part of our original concert was as good as ended; for I had no doubt that they would perform what they had promised. The other part, regarding magistrates of respectable character in the interest of Sir Laurence Dundas was future, and every one would judge for himself when the candidates were proposed. With respect to shortening the leets for the election of deacons, I said, that as it was probable I might have no personal knowledge of many of the tradesmen, and being resolved in the future steps of the election to meet with neither party, I should be glad to see the leets of both sides, that I might get information from those upon whose judgment I could most depend; and as Sir Laurence Dundas was on the spot, and I was determined in the present avowed competition to give my voice for none who were not known to be his friends, it was very probable I should

should seek information from him. As to the merchants, I was better able to judge for myself with respect to them, and would make the best choice I could, still adhering to the original agreement, of electing persons of respectable character, and such as were in the interest of Sir Laurence Dundas.

I was not ignorant of your Lordship's suspicion, that if the friends of Sir Laurence Dundas should persist in their plan of voting Mr. Dalrymple into the chair, I would drop you, and go along with them in the previous steps of the election. I was at no pains to undeceive you, but was rather willing that you should entertain that suspicion, however injurious to myself, that you might be brought to a reasonable compromise.

On the other hand, I peremptorily told Sir Laurence, that I was determined to go along with you in every previous step, if he did not drop Mr. Dalrymple, and consent that Mr. Kincaid should be Provost, and Mr. Elder Dean of Guild.

As to the condition respecting Mr. Elder's election, contained in the message delivered to your Lordship, I confess that it did not appear to me unreasonable; for if Mr. Elder be what he always hath professed, a friend to Sir Laurence Dundas, why should he not vote with his other friends? If he hath ceased to be his friend, is not the exception just? I, for my own part, will certainly perform my promise by voting for Mr. Elder at the election of magistrates; but were I, either in that election or in the previous steps, to give my vote for any person who did not appear to me favourable to the interest of Sir Laurence Dundas, I might justly be accused of breaking, in a most essential point, my agreement with your Lordship.

You will probably recollect the answer I gave to your Lordship, when you asked me why I was so much attached to Sir Laurence Dundas? I then told you, that the only favour I ever received from him was his assistance several years ago in applying to the Treasury to agree to a report from the Commissioners of the Customs here, about a mercantile affair, in which others were concerned as well as I: that I wanted nothing from him; was no hanger-on for a post, or any thing of that nature; but that I was acquainted with him above thirty years ago, appeared his friend when chosen member for the city, and have continued to be so.

You say he hath done nothing for this city since he became our member. I agree with you: I remember little he hath done. I wish he may do more, and hope that, if any proper plan shall be laid before him for serving the city, he will exert himself to execute it.

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And now I appeal to the public, whether your Lordship or I has departed from the original agreement.

You wanted me to go further than was first proposed.—I think I have gone far enough.

It is much the same as if I had agreed to take a jaunt with your Lordship and Mr. Elder to Currie's at Dalkeith; when we have got half-way you tell me, it will answer no good purpose unless I go to Dunbar: Mr. Elder, before we get the length of Currie's, insists, that we shall go to Berwick, which will contribute both to our health and pleasure; your Lordship joins in pressing me to comply: you tell me I shall have great pleasure in seeing the houses of Dalkeith, Smeaton, and many other fine things by the way.—Gentlemen, you have not kept to your agreement, I will not go one step further: you are both young, and may skip away by yourselves to Berwick, if you please. One advice I give you at parting, keep a good bridle hand, lest your horses stumble and you catch a fall.

When your Lordship came to the Council-chamber on Sabbath last, I pointed out to you the injurious reflections in the Mercury that related to me; and told you, that I was neither so old as not to feel, nor so weak that I could not make others feel. I likewise intimated to you, that I intended to publish something in my own defence, but would first shew it to you. When I called upon your Lordship yesterday for that purpose, you would not look at this paper: I then told you I wanted, that if any facts were not truly or distinctly stated, I would alter, or leave them out as you pleased; but you answered, you wanted an opportunity to justify yourself, which is most reasonable: And I hope your Lordship will be as backward as I, in carrying on any further correspondence in this way. You must be sensible, from what I have often said to you, that I sincerely regret we should have differed in these matters. And I am, my LORD,

Your LORDSHIP'S

Most obedient humble servant,

JOHN WALKER.

